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Funeral SERMON

UPON

N^o 81

Mr. NOBLE.

By a neighbouring Minister.

THE SECOND EDITION.



LONDON:

for Sam. Buckley, at the Dolphin in Little-Britain. 1713.

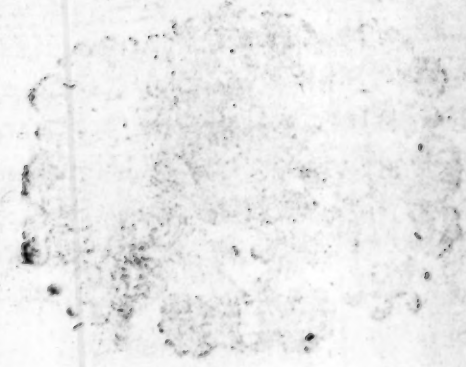
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2 Samuel, Chap. XII. Ver. 5.

David's Anger was greatly kindled against the Man, and he said to Nathan, as the Lord liveth, the Man that hath done this Thing shall surely dye.

AFTER David had debauched the Wife, and killed the Husband, he lay, for ought that appears, at least ten Months in a profound Security; and slept in both and unrepented Sins, in Murder and Adultery, both of them aggravated with the foulest circumstances those Sins can well admit of. Where the Man, that, in the Book of *Psalms*, appears tender, that he can hardly bear even his own weak Reasonings, and the Disorder of his own thoughts? The Man that was disturbed by even a little Breath of Wind, now snores upon the top-mast in a Tempest; as if light Offences, light Sorrows, were loud and querulous, and great and fearful Sins did stupify and keep the conscience silent. The Scriptures speak so kindly of this Prince, that People think he was only faulty in the Matter of *Uriah*. That is not literally exactly true, but it signifies that this was the great and lasting Blemish of his Life; and yet this continued long, without so much as his endeavouring to wash it out by his Repentance and confession; and might perhaps have staid much longer on, had not God, in Mercy to him, sent a holy

A 2

holy Man to shew him this dishonourable Sin
 and shame him into an Acknowledgment of
 Sin; which, because he had committed it in
 secret, and had not since thought upon it, he might
 imagine God had forgotten, or had never seen
 He talks of some that reasoned at that Rate
 the *Psalms*) and he seems himself to have reason'd
 little better, if we may guess of it by this strange
 Negligence and Insensibility, in which he lay
 long, and slept so soundly. From this most dan-
 gerous Security it pleased God, at length,
 awaken him, not with his Thunder, but a still and
 gentle Voice, uttered by *Nathan*, as if the coming
 on his Heart too angry and quick, might have
 confounded and dismay'd him quite. He told
 him of an Act of huge Oppression, Cruelty, and
 Injustice, committed by a rich and powerful Man
 upon his poor and helpless Neighbour; who, be-
 ing to entertain a Stranger-Guest, spared his own
 Flocks and Herds, which were without Number
 or Distinction, and would needs kill the finest
 Lamb, that was the whole Stock, and Treasure
 and Delight of his poor Neighbour: And when
David heard this, *His Anger was greatly kindled
 against this rich Man, and he said to Nathan, As
 the Lord liveth, the Man that hath done this Thing
 shall surely die; i. e.* he is worthy of Death, or
 serves to die: For the Law was not so, that Theft
 or Violence, though pitiless and cruel, should be
 punished with Death; but the guilty Party was to
 restore sometimes two-fold, sometimes four, some-
 times five, and seven, according to the Quantity
 of the Thing or Creature stolen by him. In this
 case, the Insolence and want of Pity, joined with
 the violent Injustice of taking away a Creature
 that was all the Estate, and all the Pleasure of

or Man, raised his Offence, and *David's* Anger,
 such a Pitch, that he expresses rather what such
 time deserved, than what the Law would pu-
 ish it with. Let us therefore see, what Uses we
 may make of this Relation, and the Judgment
David passed on this Occurrence. And first, we
 may observe, that he altogether condemns the In-
 justice and the Cruelty of this rich Man; and, se-
 condly, we may see, that the Way to pass a true
 Judgment on any Occasion, is to be ones self
 wholly disinterested, and to remove the Cause
 from another Person: Which was the Method
David here took, to bring *David* to a Sense and
 Acknowledgment at first, and then to the Con-
 demnation and Repentance of his Sin. *First*, The
 Cruelty and Injustice of this rich Man is here con-
 demned, *As the Lord liveth, the Man that hath done
 this Thing shall surely die, or is worthy of Death;
 he shall restore fourfold because he had no Pity.* The
 Rich are Masters of more than the Poor are; but
 the Poor have as much Right to what they have as
 the Richest can have, and therefore it is equally un-
 just to take from either; but because a little taken
 from the Poor, who have but little, leaves them
 quite destitute and naked, the same Injustice done
 to them is raised to Cruelty, because they suffer
 more by it, which would be Injustice only were
 the Party injured rich. Laws indeed cannot well
 consider this, because they have no Respect to Per-
 sons; nor consider Men as good or bad, rich or
 poor, high or low, but as lawful Possessors of their
 Goods, whether more or less; and therefore they
 regard not what is *left*, but what is *lost*; nor how
 a Man is to bear his Losses, but the Right he
 has to keep his own. But all these Things come
 into Consideration, when private People judge of
 Matters

Matters of Fact ; and though no Circumstances can make Injustice more unjust, yet they add Hardship and Sufferings, and make Injustice more or less cruel ; and because the Malignity of Offence does most especially consist in the Mischief that is suffered by them, a Man will always be more ready to condemn a Violence offered to the Poor, than to the Rich, because the Poor are more mischieved by it, and suffer more by such Injustice, and because our Pity will consider what is *left* more than what is *lost*. So that had this rich Man in the Parable taken away a Lamb with the same Violence from a rich Neighbour, with which he took it from a poor one, he had committed the same Injustice that he here did ; but that Injustice had not been so cruel nor so faulty, because not so hard and mischievous. This must not be so mistaken, as if it were a less Sin to rob the Rich than it is to rob the Poor ; for the Sin of Injustice is the same, and consists of depriving a Man of what is his by Right ; but that he who robs the Poor, adds great Cruelty to his Injustice, which is another Sin. But in this, as generally in all other Injustices committed by the Rich against the Poor, there was also Insolence and much Oppression. These are great Temptations and always in the Way of powerful wealthy People, who, if they also happen to be hard and covetous, do seldom miss of falling under them. The Pride and Lordliness of great Men makes them sufficiently negligent of all the Forms of Justice ; and when the Love of Money also takes them, they are they always ready for Oppression. Now every Body sees the Wickedness of this, that they who are rich should spare themselves, and feed upon the Poor, and they who are Powerful should oppress the Helpless. All Power is to be exercised for God

and Profit of Mankind ; that's the Power of
and all that would be like him ; the Power
the Devil is still employed in doing Mischief,
whoever so uses his Power is imitating that bad
it, and perverting the Means provided by God
the Benefit of the World. 'Tis a strange Thing
great and wealthy People should not have
Regard to Justice than other Folks, because
are so much greater Gainers by it ; they have
to lose, and have consequently more preserv'd
secured to them by Law and Justice than other
ple have, and therefore should, of all Things
the World, honour and keep them most exactly.
what would become of all their Wealth and
tiness, if the Poor, setting them before them
example, should think of dispensing for a while
Law and Justice, and fall to forcing of their
ks and Herds, and drive them to their Cot-
? So that if neither Justice, Generosity, nor
will restrain Men from invading others
ats, and oppressing the Poor, their very Gra-
e to the Laws, and the Fears of other People's
g as regardless of Justice as themselves, might
These People should consider, that by such
ence and Oppression they overthrow their own
rity, and undermine the very Ground they
upon ; for if Law and Justice should not still
uppermost, what could secure their Riches
their Honours ? How would they be distinguish-
om the Crowd of poor and common People ?
ression therefore is a very hateful Sin, because
ouses the Power that is given for the Security
Benefit, to the Mischief, of Mankind, just con-
to the Purpose and Design of God in placing
their Hands ; and very ungrateful in neglect-
that, which only can secure and preserve them ;
and

and very blind withal; in shewing the Way
 others, to break up all Inclosures, destroy Property
 and lay all Things common, and bring Men to
 to a State of War; for all this Injustice and Oppres-
 sion do in Effect and Truth. But the Office
 of this rich Oppressor in the Parable is also aggra-
 vated, by considering the Affection the poor Man
 had for his single little Creature, and the Tender-
 ness with which he cherished it. His Loss was raised
 by the Value he had set upon it, whether wisely or
 no; and Grief is always proportioned to what
 our selves think we lose, and not to the Reasonable
 Opinion of other People. Justice, indeed, cannot take
 no Notice of this, because that Fancy (which is with-
 out any Rule) is the Mother of such Affections, and
 because no private Esteem, or Love, adds any
 Worth to Objects in the Consideration of the Pub-
 lick: But private Reason will see, that the more
 we love any thing, the greater Pain it is to part
 with it, and therefore that he who knowingly de-
 prives another of what he values highly and loves
 tenderly, does certainly do him more Mischief, and
 occasion him greater Sorrows, than the bare Law
 would do, without that Kindness and Affection
 it. This is the Case of an unjust and pitiless Oppres-
 sion supposed in the Parable, and condemned by
David presently, as it needs must be by every Man
 else that considers Things rightly. All Men would
 say, that such an Act deserved great Punishment.
 Let us see, in the next Place, to the Thing intended
 by this Parable, the Matter of *Uriah* the Hittite,
 whether that were any thing better; the Husband
 was honourably employ'd in fighting for his King
 and Country, and the King in the mean time cor-
 rupts his Wife; and to enjoy her quietly and without
 out Disturbance, contrives his Death, by setting

the Place of Danger, and then deserting him that he must needs perish: *David* is, in this Parable, the *rich Man* that had many Flocks and Herds, because he had many Wives and Concubines: *Uriah* is the *poor Man*, who had but one, whom he loved most tenderly, i. e. *Bathsheba* his Wife. The *Stranger-Guest* that came unto the rich Man, was the *new Fire* that was kindled in *David's* Heart, the unlawful Passion he conceived for *Bathsheba*, that vagrant Lust that came and took up its Dwelling and Habitation with him; the Entertainment of the *Traveller*, was the Satisfaction of this Appetite.

The Iniquity was, that he spared to take of his own Abundance, and needs would rob *Uriah* of his whole and single Treasure, on which he had placed his Heart, and with whom he had lived most happily.

The Murther of *Uriah* is not touched on in the Parable, but it is in the Application, as an Effect of his unlawful Passion; and indeed it is a frequent Effect of such criminal Engagements; People are so besotted as to think of saving themselves from Shame or Punishment, or both, by venturing upon their Wickednesses, equal at least, and sometimes greater than the principal and first. Our Courts of Justice see these Reasonings and these Consequences often; that's the Security that Sin continually proposes, *this Crime will save you from Punishment of that*; if you would not endure Dishonour of Whoredom, you must strangle your Infant; if you would not be accounted a Robber and treated as such, you must make iure Beneficium, and kill the Passenger; if you are false to your Husband's Bed, and fear his Vengeance, or you like another Partner in the Way of Marryage, the Way is open to your Escape and Satisfaction by many secret Instruments of Death and

Dispatch: These Advices meet our Observations frequently, and People's Fear counsels them tally as their keenest Rage and Anger. Lust very blind impetuous Passion, and as it does it always mistake its Object, and fix on what is bidden by Reason, as well as God's Command; it does truly make Men think so fillily, imagine so vainly, reason so untowardly, and contrive weakly, and fall into such absurd Commissions, hardly any other Passion equals it in Folly and carriage: But, above all, 'tis fruitful of wicked Devices, and takes most deadly Resolutions, to secure its sinful Pleasures, or revenge its Sins and Disappointments. And it were well if Persons who are apt enough to remember the Fall of David into Murther and Adultery (to keep themselves a little in Countenance) would profit themselves a little more, of his Example, and remember that this Murther followed this Adultery, and how easily and commonly one Sin seems to call for another, without intending any such Matter. David (one may well presume) having in an unwary manner discovered and fallen in Love with Bathsheba, intended and desired only to satisfy that unlawful Passion; but when he had done that, she sent him Word, in a little time, that their Adulterous Transaction could not lie long concealed from the Eyes of the World, by Tokens not to be avoided: His Husband was in the Camp, and therefore David sends immediately for him, in order, by this means to cover both their Shame and Sin; but the King was obstinate, and resolved not to see his Wife, and gave such a Reason for it, in the xixth Chapter 11th Ver. that might have shamed a noble and virtuous Prince to Death; but David was not now the Man he used to be, his Soul was now debased

Degree, and he betook himself to Shifts unwor-
 of a Man of Honour, or common Honesty : He
 so low as to make *Uriah* drunk, thinking that
 the Rage, or the Forgetfulness of Wine, he might
 hastened home ; but nothing moved him from
 purpose, and therefore *David* resolved upon his
 which he affected in the Manner related in
 with Chapter, offering up the Life of a brave
 er, to his vile Love, and to the Fears of a Dis-
 ry. Thus you see how one Sin engages in ano-
 and I believe 'tis rarely known, that the
 erous Falshood of a Wife or Husband, ends in
 single Injury. And therefore though the prin-
 Design of this Parable was to set forth the great
 vice of Adultery it self, yet since it is so fre-
 ly attended with other Mischiefs, and was in
 's Case in particular, it may not have been
 the way to have reminded you of the usual
 quences of giving way to such unlawful Af-
 ns. Let us see a little to the Original of these
 chiefs, and to the Fountain of these corrupt
 ns. I do not intend to insist much upon
 first Peopling the World with *two* Persons
 and they both of them at full Age ; nor on
 reservation of *four* Women, each to her Hus-
 only, from the *Flood*, when the World was
 peopled the second time, and after 1500
 Experience. Those are unanswerable Proofs
 's intending one Man for one Woman, what-
 emissions he might afterwards be pleased to
 of this his primary Appointment. These In-
 are especially directed against the Multipli-
 Wives ; which though it were allowed, yet
 Adultery be never the less injurious, because
 invading another's Right ; and in Countries
 Men think they have a Right to many
 B 2 Wives,

Wives, and actually marry many (in their Wives they think themselves as much injured and as much dishonoured, when any one of them is false or corrupted, as others do when their sole and first Choice (in Christian Countries) forsakes her Marriage-Bed, or Loyalty; so that had *Uriah* violated any one of *David's* many Wives, it had been much Adultery as *David's* was with *Bathsheba*, only one. The Injury had been the same to *David* with respect to that particular Wife, and to the Children born of her, that it was to *Uriah*. The Difference was, that *David* shewed a more extravagant unbridled Fury, that was not to be kept in bounds; a fearful Degree of Lustiness, amidst such Liberties as Custom had indulged to *Eastern Princes*! But nothing lawful pleases given up to that mad Passion. Let us see the Injuries of Adultery, in a few Words, without concerning our selves with more or fewer Wives committed to one Man. *First*, That Union of Affection, without which Marriage is the greatest Blessing then in the World, is utterly broken off; which every one desires, expects, and solemnly contracts for, is hereby lost: There is nothing as Love without Fidelity. When either Party once grows false, the utmost Good that is expected is but a formal cold Civility, a Thing where no one values where sincere Affection is both and looked for. I speak not now of what is giddy, careless, covetous, ambitious People; but 'tis sure that wise considering People, who are of being easy under Marriage, will never be so without both loving and being beloved by their Partner, which is impossible to happen if either of them proves false; and therefore to corrupt the Partner of one's Bed, does appear

by that Happiness that every honest one proposes,
 and expects to find in Marriage, and thereby does
 the greatest Injury he can. The Affection of the
 kind it is, that best discharges the Duty of each Re-
 lation; and therefore he who alienates that Affec-
 tion, hinders the Duty often from being discharged
 at all, but always takes away the Joy and Comfort
 of it, and pays the Relation with meer Shew and
 Ceremony. Thus it is with Children and their
 Parents, Masters and Servants, Prince and Sub-
 ject; perswade them not to love each other, and
 they will very ill, if at all, discharge their several
 Duties; but above all Relations in the World, 'tis
 especially with Man and Wife; take off the
 Affection there, and all its Pleasure and Contents
 are at an End: All that is left, is Burthen and Mis-
 fortune. This shews us, that Adultery troubles
 the Peace of humane Life, and separates the closest
 Union and Society, and is as mischievous as any
 other Crime whatever. *Secondly*, Married People
 have such a Propriety in each the others Person,
 that it is not to be communicated: They are so
 much each others, that they are not properly their
 own, and much less can they be any one's besides;
 even the Consent of both Parties can give no Right
 to any Third, to either's Person; they have so stipu-
 lated and contracted with each other for the Power
 of each other, that no After-consent can part with
 it. So that had *Uriah* been consenting to *Bathsheba*,
 and she herself had gone willingly to *David*, the
 Man and Woman had done an Act void in it self,
 and *David* had been notwithstanding guilty of A-
 dultery; because the first Contract took away all
 future Power of making the like with any other,
 whilst they who made it lived: That alone dis-
 solves the Contract, which, had it been supposed,
 would

would have hindred it from being made, in
 Falshood and Looseness. And 'tis upon this Ground
 alone, that humane Laws have any Power to dis-
 solve Matrimonial Bonds, that were lawfully made
 at first : No Convenience nor Inconvenience is to
 come into Consideration, but Virtue only ; if nei-
 ther Party hath forfeited the Right they had in
 each the other, by giving themselves into the Power
 of any other Person, there can be no Divorce or
 Dissolution of that Bond. This shews that the Right
 which results from the Matrimonial Contract is
 stronger, if it may be, than any other Right
 whatever, being unalterable, and never to be trans-
 ferred, but by the Death of either Party. Now as
 great as the Right is, so great is the Wrong done
 by Adultery, which is the Invasion and Subversion
 of it ; and therefore 'tis a mighty Piece of In-
 justice that is done by these unwarrantable Li-
 berties ; 'tis robbing Men of what is given them
 in the firmest and most solemn Manner that can be,
 by all the Laws of God and Man. *Thirdly*, This
 Injustice draws after it many more Injustices, by
 the Confusion and Disorders it occasions in Mens
 Families, by bringing in spurious Children, and
 causing Men to bestow their Affection, Care and
 Pains, in cultivating Plants that belong not to
 them, and leaving them the Fruits of all their La-
 bours and Inheritance, which is to the Wrong also
 of those who are the true Heirs. I mention not
 here the Shame and Grief (which are also great
 Injuries) that these Violations of the Marriage-Bed
 occasion, not only to the injured Party, but to all
 the innocent Relations, who are thereby covered
 with Confusion. Enough is said to shew, that the
 corrupting another's Wife or Husband is a great
 Piece of Injustice, and an Offence equally mischie-
 vous

us to Mankind, with any other; and therefore
be equally condemned, with the pitiless, unjust
oppression of the rich Man in *Nathan's Parable*,
taking away the single Treasure and Delight of
poor Neighbour. The Love that a good and
virtuous Man is presumed to have for his Wife, an-
swers to the Fondness the poor Man here had
the Creature he had cherished and brought up
tenderly; the Right each had to what he loved,
the same. Proportioned to the Love is the sup-
posed Concern and Grief a Man would have, to
see the Object of it torn away from him by Vio-
lence, or seduced by the as violent Temptations of
Riches, Honours, and great Pleasures, to the Arms
of a Stranger. This Resemblance is enough to
make the Parable intelligible and applicable; and
who would condemn the cruel Robbery of this
Oppressor, would as certainly condemn the
adulterous Violation of *Uriah's Bed*. The Injustice
and the Cruelty were equally great in both. *Na-*
than designed by one to shadow out the other; and
David says of himself, in the rich Man, *The Man*
that hath done this Thing deserves to die. The *Jewish*
Law did not, as we have seen, condemn such
a Man to Death, but to ample Restitution; 'twas
the Excess of *David's* Pity and Displeasure, that
moved him to pronounce this cruel Oppressor de-
serving to die. But the *Jewish* Law did expressly ad-
judge the Adulterer and the Adulteress to Death;
and this obtained to our Saviour's Days, as ap-
pears by the malicious and designing *Jews* bringing
before him a Woman taken in Adultery, whom
his Law commanded to be stoned: And,
as every one knows, the Decision of our Saviour
did not determine Christian Law-givers in future
cases, to inflict a lesser Punishment than Death upon
Adul-

Adulterers; for tho' some Christian Nations have punished the Offence with Death, yet generally has been otherwise; and, I think, no Nation at this Day, in the Christian World, pursue the Crime to that Extremity. Not that the Christian Doctrine gives any Encouragement to such Liberties, for it has them in the greatest Abhorrence; the World, the Scriptures declare against them on most ample Terms, denounce the Wrath of God against them, and tell us *God will judge Adulterers* and utterly exclude them from Heaven, without particular Repentance; and the Discipline of the Church pursued this Sin with such Severity in the World, that one may see they held no Sin to exceed it in Wickedness. Nor can we find that it is less pernicious to the Peace and Quiet, the Order and good Government of Mankind, than other Offences which are constantly adjudged to be worthy of Death. The Confusion of Families do not, indeed, seem to be so mischievous to Nations as to the *Jews*, where the nice Distinction of Tribes was to serve, as to other Purposes, so specially to the surer Knowledge and Discovery of the promised Seed, the *Messiah*, of the Tribe of *Judah*, which Certainty would be destroyed by the Indulgence of such promiscuous Conjunctions; and therefore, to guard against such Mischief, the *Jews* were deterr'd by the Fears of certain Death to both the guilty Parties. The faithful Character of the married Couple resembling also the Service of one God, as the Pollutions of adulterous Mixtures did the Worship of many Deities among the Gentiles, might also be a Reason, why God to shew his Jealousy, and the Abomination he detested in Idolatry in, might punish Adultery, with Severity somewhat beyond what other Law-givers thought

Excepting these two things, it will be hard
 and a Reason why Adultery should be punished
 in Death among the Jews, and not among the
 Christians; or rather, why it should not be punish-
 ed with Death among the Christians, as it was a-
 mong the Jews. If our Saviour's Decision hath
 moved any one to condemn this Offence with less
 severity than before, 'tis a Mistake that hath shewn
 more Respect than Judgment: For certainly our
 Lord does not there determine as a Magistrate,
 when Adultery should deserve no Punishment at
 all, but to go home and sin no more, a thing that no
 man will venture to say. But thus it was, they
 came to him with this Woman, came tempt-
 ing him, that they might, from his Answer, have
 something to accuse him of. The Law of *Moses*
 punished Adultery with Death; but the *Romans*,
 whose Power they were, would not allow them
 to put that Law in Execution: It Christ therefore
 would have the Adulterers to Death, then they delate
 him to the *Roman Magistrate* as seditious, and one
 who would excite the Jews to assert their Liberty,
 to execute the Laws of *Moses*, as they should:
 according to his wonted Clemency, and as they
 expected, he should judge this Offence not to be
 worthy of Death, then would they represent him
 as a Blasphemer of the Law of *Moses* to the Peo-
 ple, and so create him Ill-will on that Part, and
 stir up enough from such as were nicely jealous
 of the Honour of their Law-giver, and sate very
 angry under the *Romans*, who suspended the Exe-
 cution of what Laws they pleased that related to
 the publick. Our Saviour, aware of their Design,
 determines the Matter so as to avoid offending
 on either Hand: He undertakes not to
 determine whether *Moses* his Law were reasonable or

not, nor whether the Jews should execute the Law in Opposition to the Romans, or rest content with the Suspension it was under from their Force; but he puts their Zeal upon a Trial that would over-throw them with Confusion, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a Stone at her.* You private Men come here to me, a private Man, to determine a Cause, already determined by the Law, as to what *might* be done, and by the Romans, as to what *is* to be done. 'Tis well, perhaps, for some of you, that such a Law as this is tied from binding you; but however if your Zeal be offended at this Restraint, and you think that Chastity and Virtue are hereby too much discouraged, let those who are intirely innocent take upon them the Responsibility and Office of Witnesses, as *Moses* appointed, *let them cast the first Stone at her.* This is a good Way to avoid the Snare that was laid for him, and cannot be the Decision of a Law-giver; for public Magistrates do not use to acquit guilty People for the Faults of Accusers and Witnesses; because guilty People are punished for their Guilt, and because they deserve it, which they may do as well when their Accusers are equally guilty with themselves as when they are altogether innocent. If punishing People only must be Witnesses and Accusers, Offenders would be, generally, in great Danger. And as to what our Saviour says of the Woman her self, when left alone with him, *Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more,* signifies, that he would not take upon him the Office of a Magistrate, who was a private Man, but that which belonged to him, as a Prophet and Servant of God, that he performed, and that he bid her repent, and live in Chastity for the future. So that from what our Saviour says on this

at, no Relaxation of the Jewish Law can be eluded, he seems to say nothing to that Matter. what he says to her, he says to all who have guilty of the like Offence, *Neither do I condemn you, but go, repent, and sin no more*; and this speaks, not with respect to any national Laws, which may punish this Offence with Death, if they see fit, or with a lesser Punishment) but with respect to the Laws of God, and to the Judgment of the other World. The Laws of God do certainly adjudge Adulterers to everlasting Death, (as we have seen before) that is the standing Rule of Justice; but Mercy, like the *Roman* Power, suffers the Execution of it; and Christ, in the present Time, interposes Pardon upon Conditions, *and sin no more*: This Goodness of God is to lead Men to Repentance. I do not condemn thee, says our Lord to the Adulterers; but neither doth he quit her, *i. e.* with relation to temporal Punishment from the Laws; but he condemns Adultery every where, till Men repent of it, and mend; when it is, --- *Neither do I condemn thee*; or, to encourage thee to leave this wicked Practice, *Repent and sin no more*, and I (to whom all Judgment is committed by the Father) will not condemn thee for what is past. And this was the Condition upon which the Prophet so soon pronounced the pardon of *David*, upon Confession of his Sin, *I have sinned*, saith *David*, v. 13. *against the Lord*; *Nathan said to David, The Lord also hath put away thy Sin, thou shalt not die*. Is it not very happy for us, that we have to deal with God rather than with Man? *The Man that hath done this thing shall die*, swore *David*, presently, upon the hearing of this Offence: *The Man that hath done this thing shall live, and shall not die*, saith God immediately.

mediately, upon Confession and Repentance. Who would be backward to confess their Sins, to God who knows them better than our selves, and more Mercy for us, than either Reason or the Law will let us have for one another? It has not been misobserved, that *David*, in this Condemnation was the Voice of the Law, awarding Death immediately to Sin; and *Nathan* the Voice of the Gospel, proffering Life and Pardon to the Confession and Repentance of it. And this is certain in the Lord's most merciful and gracious Covenant, that not a Soul who will apply this Remedy shall be lost. For as these horrible Offences committed by *David* make him a sad Example of the Weakness and wicked Disposition of humane Nature, without the Grace of God preventing and assisting us, evermore concurring with our greatest Care and Watchfulness, so the Forgiveness of them in a speedy Way, is to teach us never to despair of God's Mercies, provided we confess our Sins with Contrition and Humility, repent in earnest, and forsake them.

Other Uses remain to be made of these Words, but I have been too long already for one Text. And the Application is so easy, that I dare say I am prevented in it. I cannot have been speaking, all this While, of *David's* Adultery and Murther, but must needs have had your Heads filled with the dreadful Instance of them both, in a much more wicked Man; whom the Justice of God hath overruled to your Sight; and, by the righteous Sentence of the most excellent and upright Magistrate, hath condemned to Death with Infamy in this World, and to a more shameful Punishment before his terrible Tribunal in the next, to answer for those crying Sins. My Heart was full of these Thoughts, and my Eyes of Tears, upon that Day; but I

had to hear my People flocked in so great Numbers
to that Execution; and glad it happened on a Day,
when Business and Mens Trade and Livelihood
would cause them to resort that Way, as well as
curiosity and sad Concern. May God, said I, give
to that great Offender, the Grace of true Contriti-
on and Repentance first, and then the Wisdom and
the Happiness of so expressing it by proper Words
and Gestures, that every single Creature of that
Multitude may reap some Benefit by that Example!
Strike, Lord, upon the Hearts of every Man and
Woman in that great Assembly, that they may find
those Feelings and Affections that are suitable to
their Condition and their spiritual Wants, raised in
them. I know not if my Prayers were heard; but
you could hardly see that *Sight*, and know the Sto-
ry that occasioned it, without revolving in your
Minds a Multitude of Thoughts that would most
easily arise upon it. You could not, I am sure, come
home, without considering what a Train of Mis-
chiefs a lawless and unbridled Lust draws after it;
how great Misfortunes generally attend the Mar-
riages which Riches and Convenience make, with-
out a due Regard to Love, or to the Virtue, Health
and Temper, and good Qualities, or Fame and
Reputation of the Parents, or the Partners: How
short the Passage is from an Indifference to a Slight,
from a Slight to a Contempt, and from Contempt
to Hatred, of a Wife or Husband; and consequent-
ly, how much Care, Good-nature, and Discretion,
will be needful to preserve and cherish that Affec-
tion in ones own, and in each others Heart, that is
to make the married State easy and happy. How
many thousands make their Lives most miserable,
for want of that Indulgence, that Allowance and
forgiveness of each others Indiscretions, Over-
sights,

fights, and Faults, which they are ready in Good
 nature and Good-breeding, to give to all the World
 besides. Nor should I mention this, but that I see
 in the Power of a World of little trifling Accidents
 to disengage and alienate the Hearts of Wives and
 Husbands from each other, which often ends in
 scandalous and sinful Liberties on one or other Side
 and fills the House with Infamy and Misery; and
 frequently provokes the Wrath of God to shew
 self in some most exemplary Vengeance. You could
 not help observing to each other, whilst you were
 talking on the Way, how sad a thing it was to see
 a lively well-looking Man cut off untimely, in a
 Moment, in the full Strength and Vigour of his
 Age, defeating all his Parents and Relations Hopes
 and Cares, and Charges in his Education, and fill-
 ing them instead with Shame and Sorrows increas-
 pressible, and never ceasing. Who can conceive
 those Sorrows? What but Death can put an End to
 them? And this occasioned by another's Death
 the Murder of an innocent unhappy Man, cut off
 untimely in a Moment also, and God knows how
 prepared for such a sudden Call to Judgment; fill-
 ling another House and Family with equal Sorrow
 also, but yet without the Shame, which makes the
 Cup abundantly less bitter; and both these People
 brought to their untimely Ends *by the Means of a*
whorish Woman, whose House was literally the Way to
Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death, Prov. vi.
 27. What was your Mind, when all these Thoughts
 came crowding on together? You did not, I dare
 say, believe the shameless false Adulteress, who
 took the Guide of her Youth, and forgot the Covenant
 of her God, was any ways less faulty, or less odious
 in his Sight, than he who suffered Death for mis-
 cherishing of her Husband, altho' the Laws have not

yet overtaken her ; which she has Reason to fear
they will some Time or other do, by some new
Crime, unless the Grace of God make her Conver-
sion and Repentance as exemplary, as her perjuri-
ous Violation of her Marriage Vows hath made her
famous ? And as you could not escape making
these Reflections, or the like, upon *that Sight*, so I
will hope you made the proper Use of them ; call-
ing your own Ways to Remembrance, and either
thanking God for his restraining Grace, that hath
given you a purer Heart and cleaner Hands, and
kept you entire from those Defilements ; or praising
him for having delivered you from the Power of
such impure Habits, as tended naturally, and might
have brought you easily into the like abominable
commitments with this unhappy Pair : Or begging
earnestly the Assistance of his holy Spirit, to rescue
you immediately from the Captivity of Sin, in
which you are still held, and forming thereupon
the strongest and sincerest Resolutions of breaking
those wicked Courses, avoiding that ensnaring
company, retrenching that Excess of Meats and
Drinks, abstaining from those joyous Feasts of
Musick, Song, or Dance, or any thing besides that
you remember to have fanned or fed those Fires
within, that have consumed your Virtue, and been
any Time an Occasion of your falling into Sin.
Those Liberties that have sometimes been innocent
in your selves, and are, and may be, always so to
others, must yet be shunned and let alone by you,
if you have found your Reason and Religion have
been mastered by them. No one can safely mea-
sure his Strength either of Body or Mind, but by
Experience and Success ; and therefore nothing can
be innocent that hurts, no Enemy be held contemp-
tible, that brings us into Bondage.

And

And as I hope you reasoned thus, and made Resolutions for your selves, so I must tell Friends, you are obliged to do, each for your self, for your Children, your Relations, Servants and Dependants, and all for whom you are concerned, in their distinct Degrees and Measures. Give them good Instructions, give them good Examples; preserve your Interest with them by the same, and your Authority over them by the same. Never put it out of your Power to admonish or reprove them for their Offences, for fear of being reproached with the like your selves. Say what you will, the Liberties they see you take, will be the Lessons they will soonest learn, if Inclination lead that Way. I would I could tell what to do to impress these things most deeply on your Minds, or even to preserve the Impressions that are already made, by what you have heard and seen so lately. I trust them to the Grace of God, and make an Appeal with Hope that when you hear us, in his Name pronounce those two Commandments, *Thou shalt do no Murther*, and *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, you will pray with more Attention, and more Fervency, than usually you do, *Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep these Laws*.



F I N I S.